Old English Carols.

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Old English Carols.

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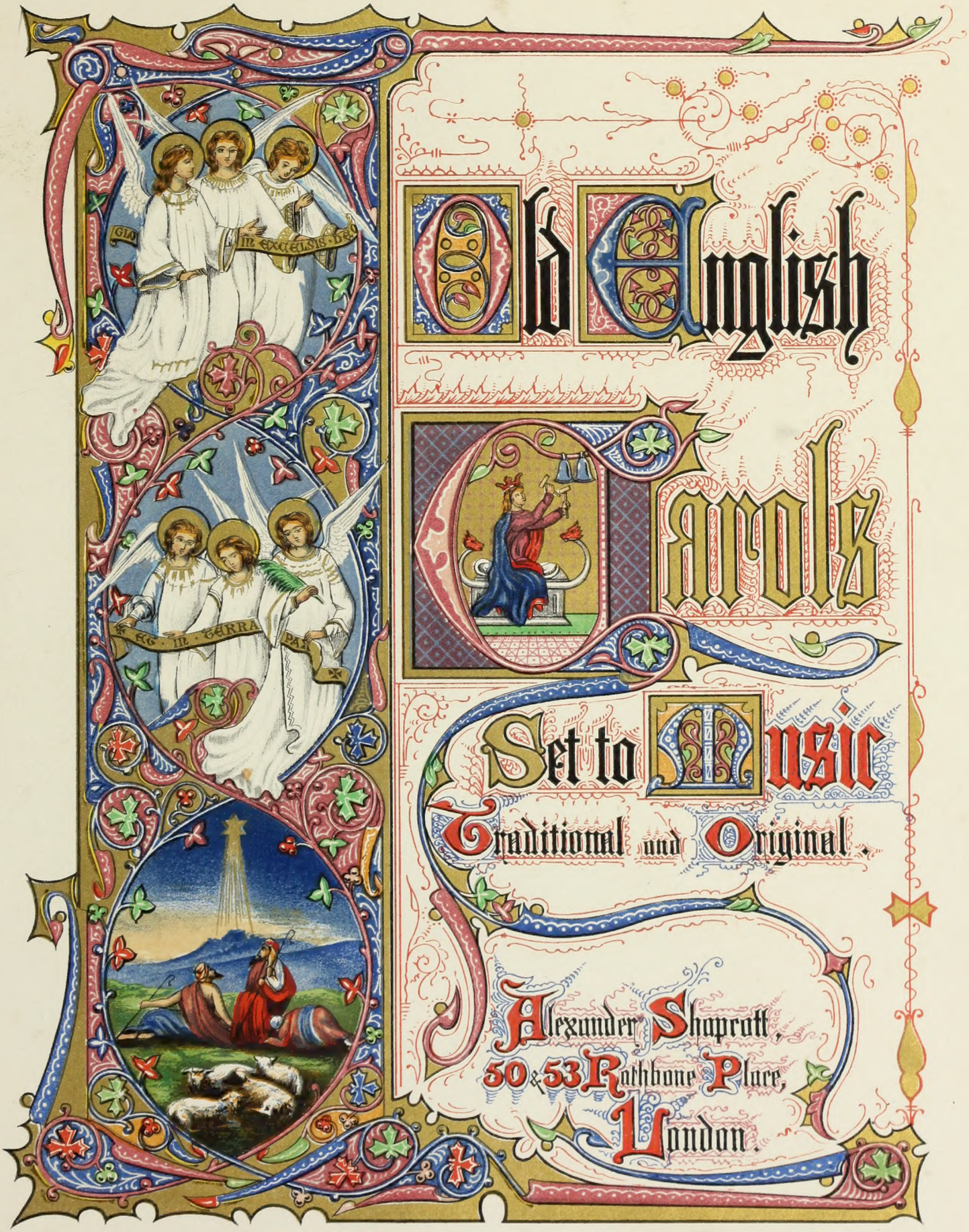
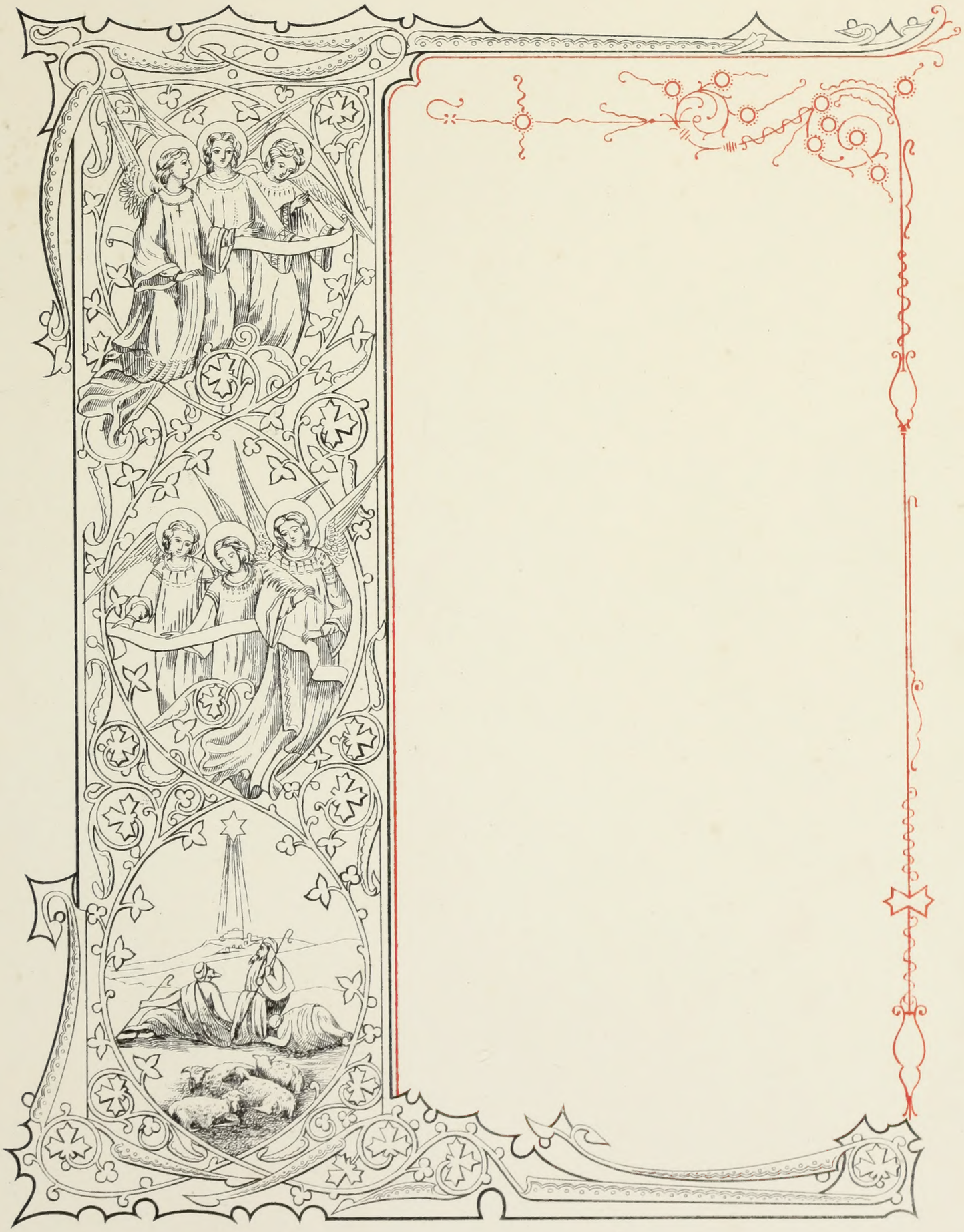

Old English
Carols
Set to Music
Traditional and Original.
Alexander Shapcott,
50 & 53 Rathbone Place,
London.



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The Borders and Initial Letters founded upon the style of Illuminated MSS. of the 13th Century.

INTRODUCTION.

IN the following outlines an attempt has been made to carry out the style of illumination most prevalent in England during the latter part of the thirteenth century. It is a style at once characteristic and national, being to illumination what that known as Early English is to architecture, only differing the one from the other, as the materials employed require a different mode of expression and combination.

In particularizing architecture, the decorator must be named in connection with the limner in stained glass and the worker in stone, who heightened the carved imagery with gold and colour and filled up blank wall spaces with quaint illustrations of sacred and legendary subjects, depicted in the costume and traditional spirit of the age. To cite a familiar example: The dragon carved in stone, and twined about the capital of the pillar which supports the Abbots' Stall, in the Chapter House of Westminster Abbey, may be found in a hundred varied combinations in the "Vegetius" and other MSS. of the same period; while the canopies, figure subjects, diapers and foliage of a like era, are also reproduced in the painted windows of the Cathedrals of Canterbury, Chartres and Rouen, and in the illuminated pages of contemporary manuscripts.

It may be advisable to point out a few of the finest examples of manuscripts of the 13th century, preserved in the British Museum, and to which access is procurable; for, while the difficulties they present for imitation must damp the ardour of the most enthusiastic student, still, if ever there be a desire to excel, it can only be attained by studying the best models, and these are conspicuous for their beauty of design, execution and finish.

Perhaps the finest example extant, in which a definite type of this style is first exhibited, may be found in a Psalter now in the British Museum, but formerly in the

library of Archbishop Tennison. Irrespective of its artistic merits, this volume is of great historical interest. It is believed to have been executed in the Convent of the Blackfriars in London, as a wedding gift from Edward I. and Queen Eleanor to their third son, Alonzo, betrothed to Florent, daughter of the Count of Holland. The young Prince died in the August of 1284, immediately after the marriage contract had been signed. This may account for the incompleteness of the work. For on examination, it is evident that the original artist only executed sixteen pages, and that it was afterwards finished by inferior hands. Subsequently, it came into the possession of Humphrey de Bohen, Earl of Hereford and Constable of England, whose coat of arms is found emblazoned on its pages.

The Latin Bible (Bibl. Reg. 1.D.1.) is another fine example (date about 1270). The ornamental work is peculiar and somewhat fantastic. A rich green, which characterizes the English school of this period, is largely introduced; the writing is very minute and delicate.

The Vegetius (add. MS. 11698) is one of the most celebratedof late 13th century work. It contains no miniatures; the ornamentation being confined to the initial letters, which occasionally expand into borders. The griffin, under a variety of forms, is the leading motive of decoration, combined with leafage of a conventual type, exquisitely drawn and coloured. There is some blue and red pen work introduced into the capitals within the text, and much invention is shewn in the line finishings.

If the introduction of miniatures be desired, no better example can be cited than the splendid copy of the Gospels (add. MS. 17341), probably executed in France, and of the same date as the Vegetius. Here again the griffin is introduced into the foliage, in endless variety, while the figure drawing is the perfection of quaintness, finish and individuality. The miniatures are generally placed under canopies, similar in design to those found in the painted glass of a contemporary period, with backgrounds of either burnished gold or diaper work.

Another very fine MSS. Bible is preserved in the Advocate's Library at Edinburgh, especially remarkable for the beauty of the figure drawing.

In adapting this style to modern illumination, great latitude must be allowed. The student finds an insurmountable difficulty in combining the wild outline loveliness of Gothic art with modern thought and expression.

In the accompanying illustrations, great liberties have been taken,—not from inclination but necessity. Incompetent to produce a faithful copy of the old, an attempt has been made to base the modern on an imitation of the old, and no scruple has been made in introducing figures and designs taken from early Italian painters,—Giotto, Fra Angelico, Lippi and their imitators.

A few practical hints upon colouring may be found serviceable.

Nothing can compete with vellum as a material to work upon; but it is somewhat expensive, and good substitutes may be found in vellum drawing—paper, and London boards.

But few colours are absolutely necessary. The following list comprises those most essential; they should be in tubes or pans, and are known as moist colours:—French Blue, Cobalt Blue, Carmine or Crimson Lake, Vermilion, Chrome Yellow, Gamboge, Emerald Green, Green Oxide of Chromium, Vandyke Brown, Lamp Black, Indian Ink, and Chinese White.

For gilding, a composition, called "Water-mat Gold Size," is prepared by Messrs. Winsor and Newton. It is somewhat sticky; but mixed with an equal part of Vermilion and a drop of gum water, it forms an excellent medium on which to apply the gold leaf. Mix well together with the palette knife, add a little gall, and dilute with water to the consistency of cream, and paint the part to be gilded. When thoroughly dry, breathe on it, and immediately apply the gold leaf (sold in books); press it down with fine wadding and dust off the superfluous particles with a soft camel's hair brush. It may be gently rubbed with an agate when a burnished surface is required. Shell gold is easy of application, and where expense is no object, a safe and pleasant method of gilding. All imitations are worthless for permanent work, as time changes them to black. For practice and copying, "Wolff & Sons' Illuminating cake" answers every purpose.

Gillott's Lithographic Pens are excellent for outline and scroll work.

Lamp black, mixed with a little liquid gum, is the most intense black that can be obtained.

A little gall should be added when any colour shows a tendency to greasiness.

Great care is required in the outline. All colours must be made opaque by the addition of Chinese White, with the exception of black and vermilion, which contain this essential. The prevailing characteristic of this style of illumination is great precision of outline; pure flat colour relieved by white, surrounded by a glossy black outline, drawn with decision and clearness. Neither must the fine hair line of white, which uniformly edges all the colours, be forgotten. It is upon this that all the sparkle and jewelled appearance of the illumination depends.

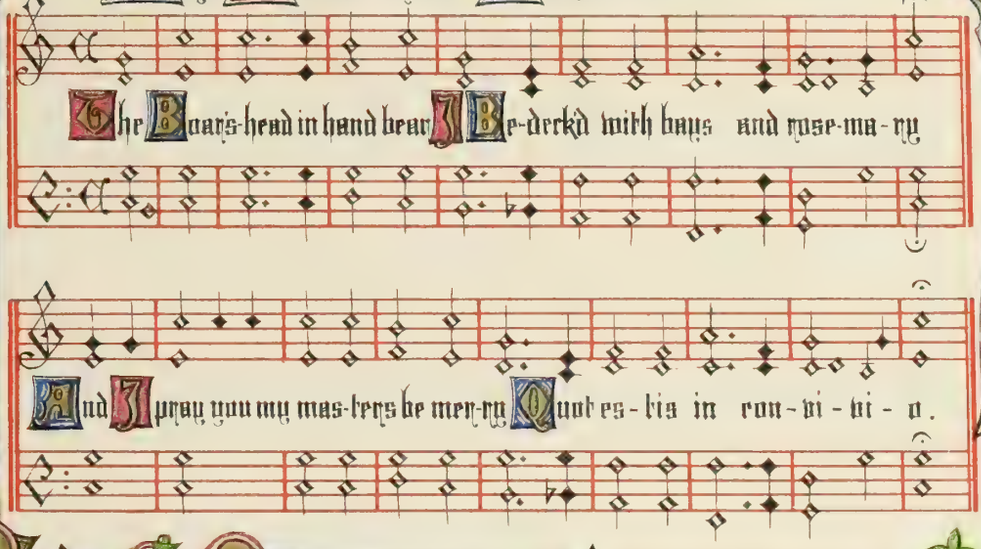
Deep blue and pink of a salmon tint, are the colours usually employed as grounds, relieved by delicate markings of white. These white hair line finishings should be executed the last, with a brush, such as is used by the lithographic draughtsman, viz.: a fine sable reduced to a long taper point, by passing a knife round the base of the quill.

The materials for illumination, prepared by Messrs. Winsor and Newton, and sold by Mr. Shapcott, can be safely recommended.

If further information be required, the student is advised to obtain "A Manual of Illumination," by J. J. Laing, published by the same firm.

A. E. G.

The Boar's-head Carol.



The Boar's head in hand bear I
Bedeck'd with bays and rosemary
And I pray you my masters be merry
Quot estis in convivio
Chorus Caput apri defero
Reddens laudes Domino

The Boar's head as I understand
Is the bravest dish in all the land
When thus bedeck'd with a gay garland
Let us servire cantico
Chorus Caput apri defero

Our steward hath provided this
In honour of the King of Bliss
Which on this day to be served is
In Regimensi Atrio
Chorus Caput apri defero

Old English Carols.

The Boar's Head.

This Carol is preserved in the Bodleian Library at Oxford. The collection, of which it is now the sole fragment, was printed by Wynkyn de Wode, at London, in 1521.

A CAROL.

"BRINGYNG IN THE BORE'S HEDDE."

CAPUT apri differo,
Reddens laudes Domino.

The bore's hedde in hande bring I,
With garlands gay, and rosemary;
I praye you all synge merrily.
Qui estis in convivio.

The bore's hedde, I understande,
Is the chefe servyce of this lande,
Loke where ever it be fande.
Servite cum cantico.

Be gladde, lordes, bothe more and lasse,
For this hath ordeyned our stewarde,
To chere you all this Christmasse,
The bore's hedde with mustarde.

The following modernized form of the foregoing Carol is annually sung on Christmas Day, at Queen's College, Oxford.

The boar's head in hand bear I,
Bedecked with bays and rosemary;
And I pray you, my masters be merry.
Quot estis in convivio
Caput apri defero,
Reddens laudes Domino.

The boar's head, as I understand,
Is the rarest dish in all this land,
When thus bedeck'd with a gay garland.
Let us servire cantico,
Caput apri defero,
Reddens laudes Domino.

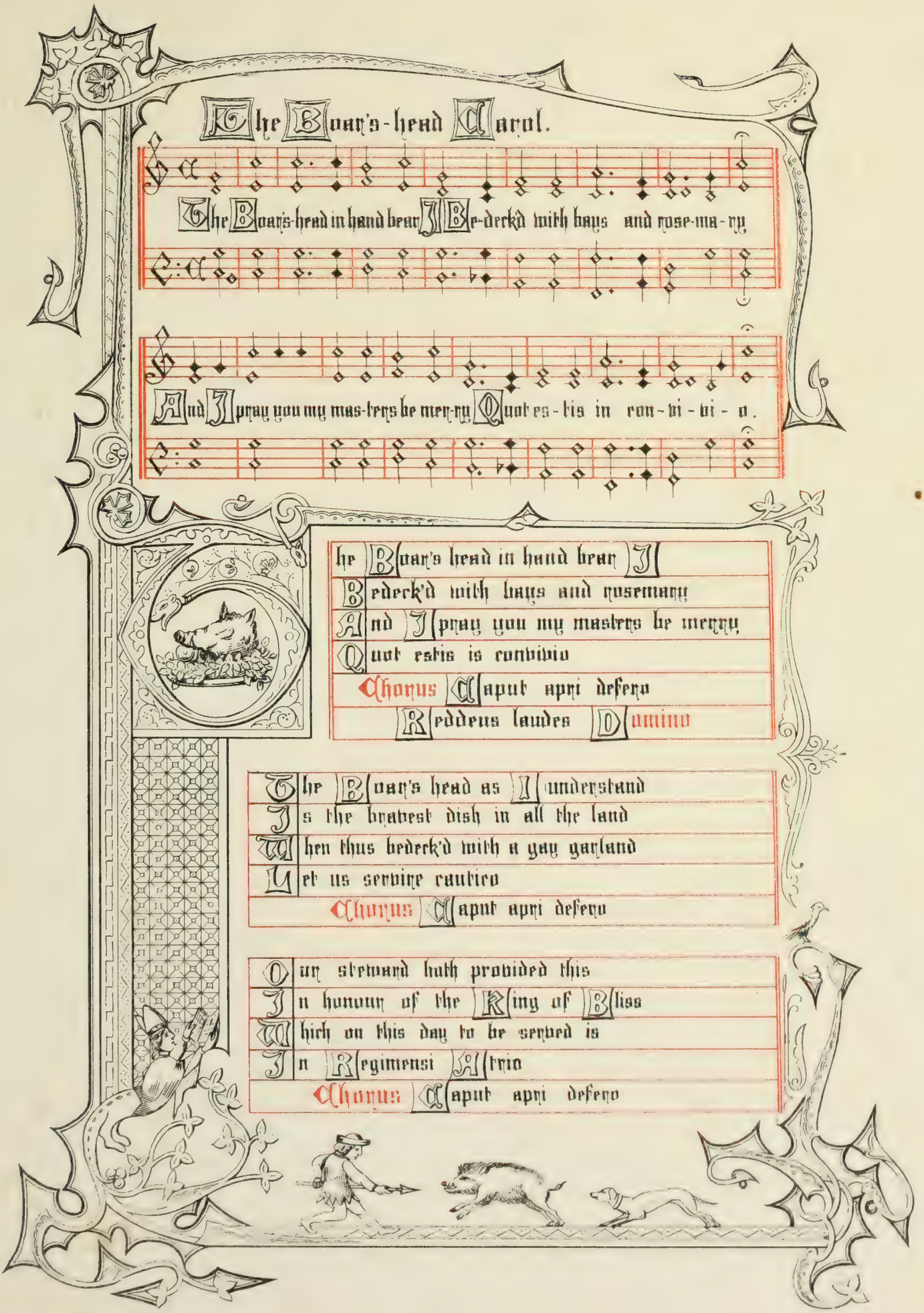
Our steward hath provided this,
In honour of the King of Bliss;
Which on this day to be served is
In Regimensi Atrio
Caput apri defero,
Reddens laudes Domino.

The Boar's-head Carol.

The Boar's head in hand bear I
Bedeck'd with bays and rosemary
And I pray you my masters be merry
Quot estis is convivio
Chorus Caput apri defero
Reddens laudes Domino

The Boar's head as I understand
Is the bravest dish in all the land
When thus bedeck'd with a gay garland
Let us serving caubico
Chorus Caput apri defero

Our steward hath provided this
In honour of the King of Bliss
Which on this day to be served is
In Regimensi Atrio
Chorus Caput apri defero



The Angel Gabriel.

A popular Carol in the Western Counties. The date of its composition is uncertain.

THE Angel Gabriel from God
Was sent to Galilee,
Unto a Virgin, fair and free,
Whose name was call'd Marie;
And when the Angel thither came,
He fell down on his knee,
And looking up in the Virgin's face,
He said, "All hail Marie!"
Then sing we all, both great and small,
Noël, Noël, Noël;
We may rejoice to hear the voice
Of the Angel Gabriel.

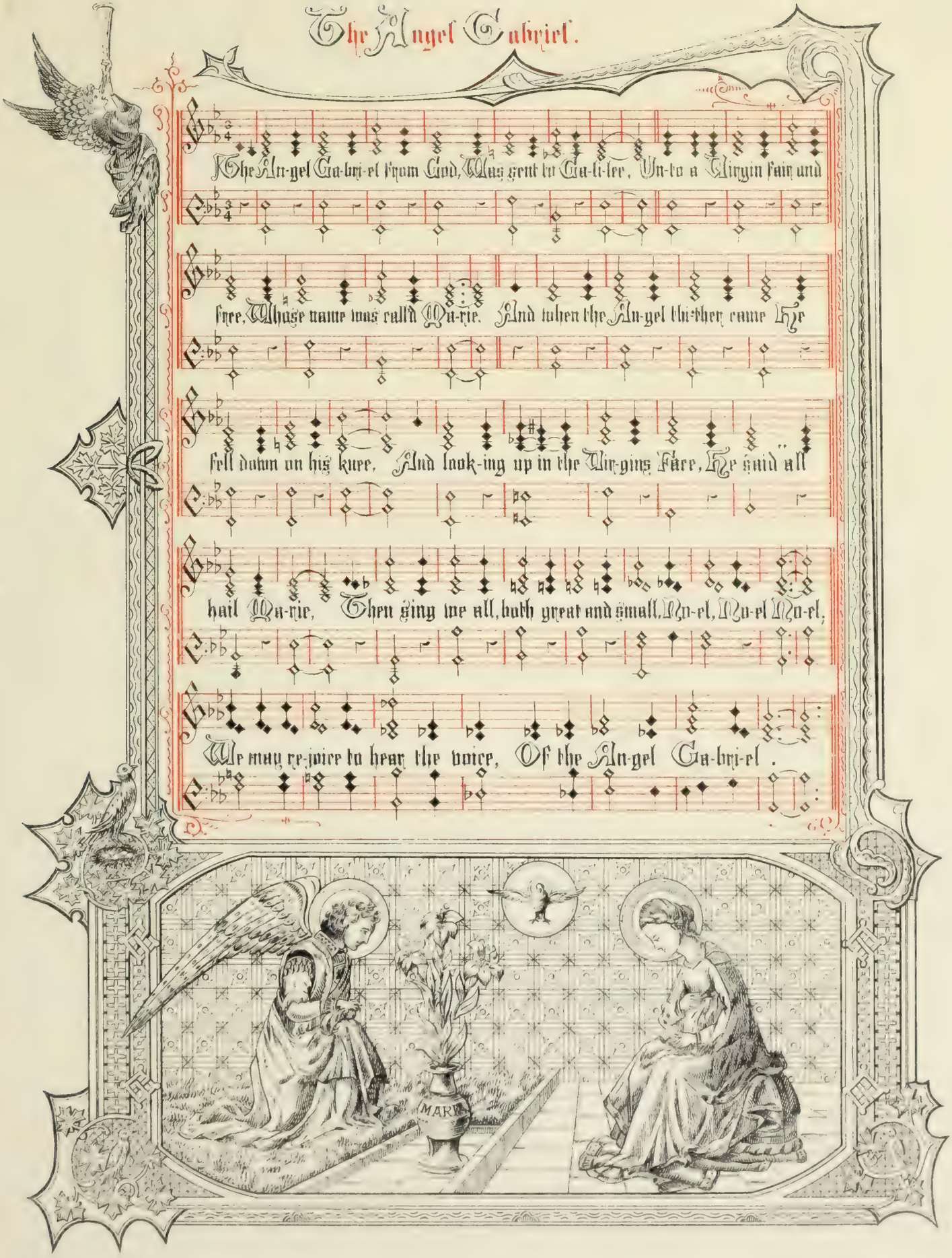
Mary anon, looked him upon,
And said, "Sir, what are ye?
I marvel much at these tidings
Which thou hast brought to me.
Married I am, unto an old man,
As the lot fell upon me;
Therefore I pray depart away,
For I stand in doubt of thee."
Then sing, etc.

" Mary," said he, " be not afraid;
But do believe in me;
The power of the Holy Ghost
Shall overshadow thee.
Thou shalt conceive, e'en without grief,
As the Lord told unto me;
God's own dear Son from Heaven shall come,
And shall be born of thee."
Then sing, etc.

This came to pass as God's will was,
Even as the Angel told;
About midnight, an Angel bright,
Came to the Shepherd's fold,
And told them then, both where and when
Born was the child, our Lord,
And all along, this was their song—
" All glory be given to God."
Then sing, etc.

Good people all, both great and small,
The which do hear my voice;
With one accord, let's praise the Lord,
And in our hearts rejoice;
Like sister and brother, let's love one another,
Whilst we our lives do spend;
Whilst we have space, let's pray for grace,
So let my Carol end.
Then sing, etc.

The Angel Gabriel.



In Bethlehem, that noble place.

This Carol is to be found in a small volume, bearing the title of "Christmas Carolles newly Imprinted.—Imprinted at London in the Powltry, by Richard Kele, dwelling at the longe shop under Saynt Myldredes Chyrche," and was probably published about the year 1550.

BE we merry in this feast,
In quo Salvator natus est.

In Bethlehem, that noble place,
As by prophcy said it was,
Of the Virgin Mary, full of grace,
Salvator mundi natus est.
Be we merry, etc.

On Christmas night, an Angel it told
To the shepherds keeping their fold,
That in Bethlehem with beasts wolde,[1]
Salvator mundi natus est.
Be we merry, etc.

The shepherds were compassed right,
About them was a great light,
"Dread ye naught," said the Angel bright,
Salvator mundi natus est.
Be we merry, etc.

[1] Wild.

" Behold! to you we bring great joy,
For why? Jesus is born to-day
Of Mary, that mild may.[1]
Salvator mundi natus est."

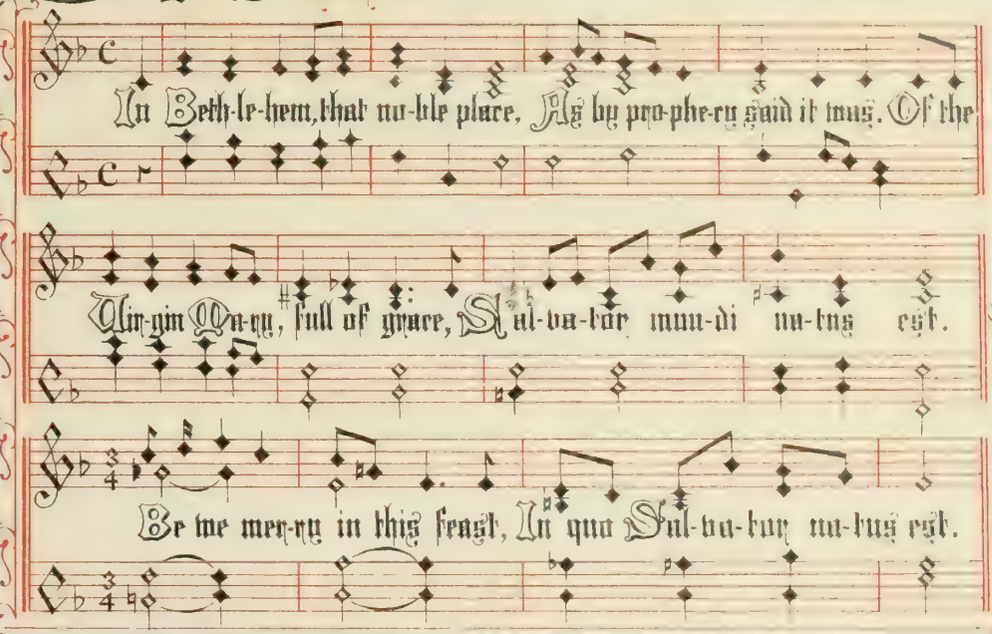
Be we merry, etc.

And thus in faith find it ye shall,
Lying poorly in an ox's stall;
The shepherds then lauded God all.
Quia Salvator mundi natus est.

Be we merry in this feast,
Salvator mundi natus est.

[1] Maid.

In Bethlehem.



On Christmas night an Angel it told,
To the shepherds keeping their fold,
That in Bethlehem with beasts moldr,
Salvator mundi natus est.
Be we merry in this feast,
In quo Salvator natus est.

The Holly and the Ivy.

This Carol is stated to have been taken from "an old broadside," printed about 1710. It is still popular at Birmingham.

THE holly and the ivy
Now both are full well grown,
Of all the trees that are in the wood,
The holly bears the crown.
Chorus—O, the rising of the sun.
The running of the deer,
The playing of the merry organ,
The singing in the quire.

The holly bears a blossom,
As white as any flower,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
To be our sweet Saviour.
O, the rising of the sun, etc.

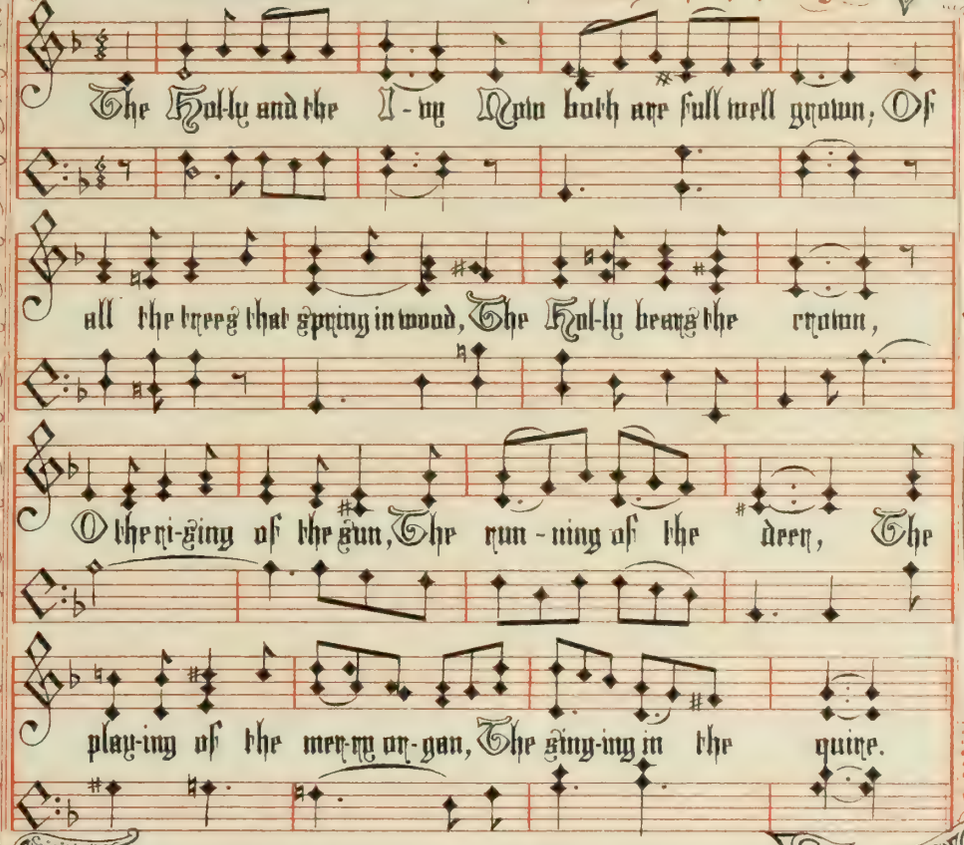
The holly bears a berry,
As red as any blood,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
To do poor sinners good.
O, the rising of the sun, etc.

The holly bears a prickle,
As sharp as any thorn,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
On Christmas day, in the morn.
O, the rising of the sun, etc.

The holly bears a bark,
  As bitter as any gall,
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ,
  For to redeem us all.
                O, the rising of the sun, etc.

The holly and the ivy,
  Now both are full well grown,
Of all the trees that are in the wood,
  The holly bears the crown.
                O, the rising of the sun,
                  The running of the deer,
                The playing of the merry organ,
                  The singing in the quire.

The Holly and the Ivy.



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On Christmas day in the morn

The Holly bears a berry
As red as any blood
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
To do poor sinners good.

The Holly bears a bark
As bitter as any gall
And Mary bore sweet Jesus Christ
For to redeem us all.

The First Noël.

It is difficult to fix any date to this popular Carol. It is found included in Davis Gilbert's "Collection of Carols sung in the West of England."

THE first Noël the Angel did say,
Was unto poor shepherds in fields as they lay;
In fields where they lay keeping their sheep,
In a cold winter's night when snow was so deep.
Noël, Noël, Noël, Noël,
Born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a star
Shining in the East beyond them far,
And to the earth it gave great light,
And so continued both day and night.
Noël, etc.

And by the light of that same star,
Three wise men came from countries far;
To seek for a king was their intent,
And to follow the star wherever it went.
Noël, etc.

The star drew nigh to the North West,
O'er Bethlehem it took its rest,
And there it did both stop and stay,
Right over the place where Jesus lay.

Noël, etc.

Then did they know assuredly,
Within that house the King did lie;
One entered in then for to see,
But found the Babe in poverty.

Noël, etc.

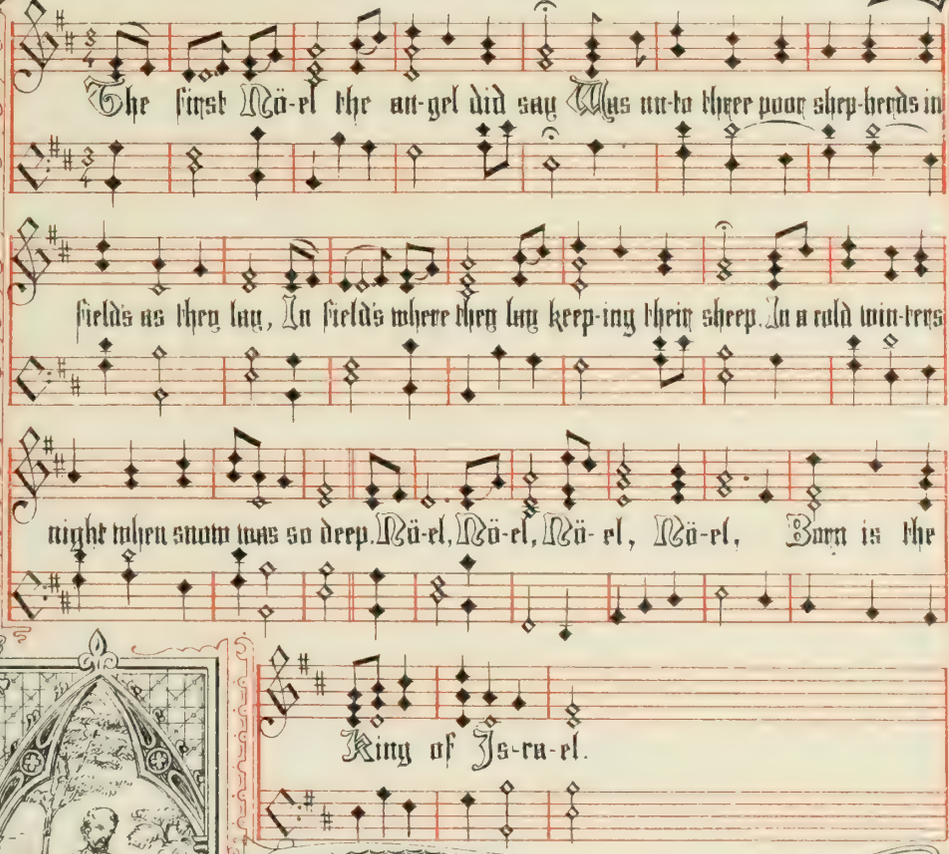
Then entered all the wise men three
Most reverently upon their knee,
And offered there in His presence,
Both gold, and myrrh, and frankincense.

Noël, etc.

Now let us all with one accord,
Sing praises to our Heavenly Lord,
That did make heaven and earth of nought,
But with His blood mankind hath bought,

Noël, Noël, Noël, Noël,
Born is the King of Israel.

The First Noël.



They looked up and saw a Star,
Shining in the East beyond them far,
And to the earth it gave great light,
And so continued both day and night.

And by the light of that same Star,
Three Wise Men came from countries far,
To seek for a king was their intent,
And to follow the Star whereever it went.

A Babe is Born.

This Carol dates as far back as the middle of the Fifteenth Century, in the time of Henry VI. In accordance with a mode prevalent in the religious poetry of that period, the Latin words with which each verse is terminated, are the first lines of hymns used in the Church Service.

NOWEL el el el, now is well
That ever was woe.

A Babe is born all of a Maide,
In the salvation of us,
To them we sing both night and day,
Veni Creator, Spiritus.

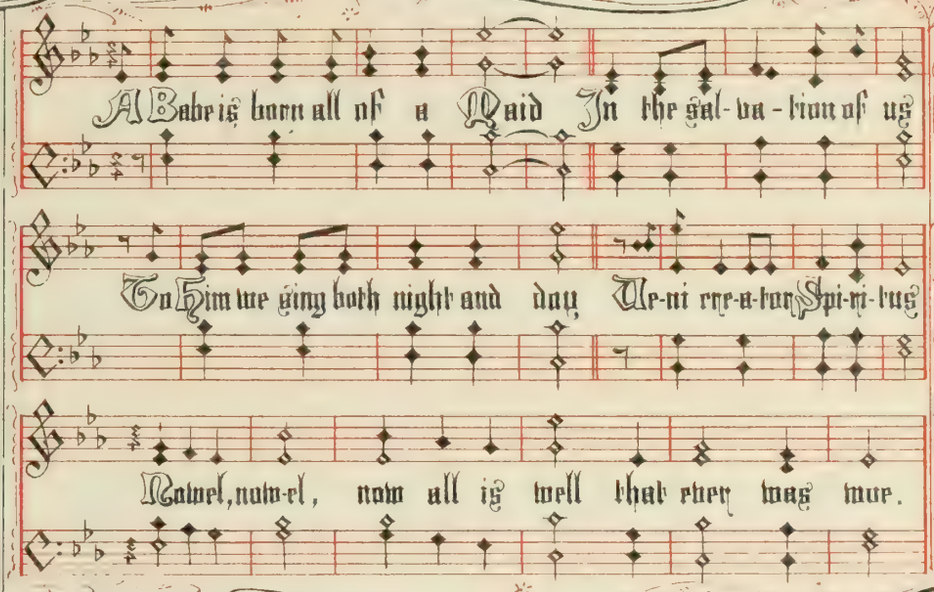
At Bethlehem, that blessed place,
The Child of Bliss born He was;
Him to serve God give us grace,
O Lux, Beata Trinitas.

There came three kings out of the East,
To worship the King that is so free,
With gold, and myrrh, and frankincense,
A solis ortus cardine.

The herds heard an Angel cry,
  A merry song then sung he,
Why are ye so sore aghast?
  Jam ortus solis cardine.

The Angel came down with a cry,
  A fair song then sung he,
In the worship of that Child,
  Gloria Tibi, Domine.

A Babe is born.



Nowel el el el, now all is well
That ever was war.

BABE is born of a Maid
In the salvation of us
To Him we sing both night and day
Veni Creator Spiritus

At Bethlehem that blessed place
The child of bliss born He was
Him to serve GOD give us grace
O Vos Beata Trinitas

The Cherry-tree Carol.

The legendary story contained in this Carol is found embodied in the Mystery of the "Birth of Christ," represented at Coventry in the Fifteenth Century.

Part I.

JOSEPH was an old man,
An old man was he,
He married sweet Mary,
The queen of Galilee.

As they went a walking
In the garden so gay,
Maid Mary spied cherries
Hanging over yon tree.

Mary said to Joseph,
With her sweet lips so mild,
"Pluck those cherries, Joseph,
For to give to thy Child."

O then replied Joseph,
With words so unkind,
"I will pluck no cherries
For to give to thy Child."

Mary said to cherry-tree,
"Bow down to my knee,
That I may pluck cherries
By one, two, and three."

The uppermost sprig then
Bowed down to her knee;
"Thus you may see, Joseph,
Those cherries are for me."

"O eat your cherries, Mary,
O eat your cherries now,
O eat your cherries, Mary,
That grow upon the bough."

Part II.

As Joseph was a walking
  He heard an Angel sing :—
This very night shall Christ be born,
  The Angels' Lord and King.

His birthplace shall be neither
  In housen nor in hall;
Nor in the place of Paradise,
  But in the oxen's stall.

He neither shall be clothèd
  In purple nor in pall;
But in the linen white and fair
  That usen babies all.

He neither shall be rockèd,
  In silver nor in gold;
But in a wooden manger rude.
  That resteth on the mould.

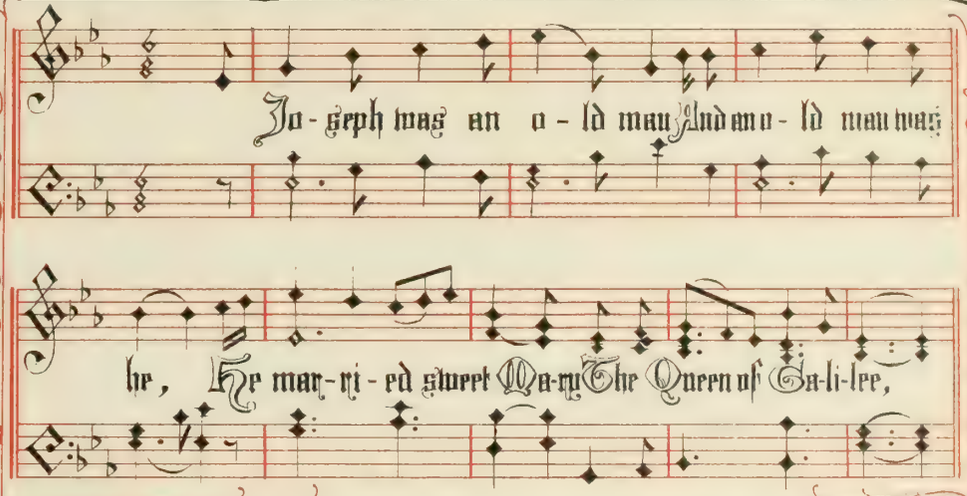
He neither shall be washen,
  With white wine, nor with red;
But with the water from the spring
  That on you shall be shed.

As Joseph was a walking
  Thus did an Angel sing:—
And Mary's Son, at midnight hour,
  Was born to be our King.

Then be ye glad, good people,
  This night of all the year,
And light ye up your candles, for
  His star it shineth clear.

And all in Earth and Heaven,
  A joyous carol sing;
For lo! to us a Child is born,
  And all the bells do ring.

The Cherry Tree Carol.



Joseph was an old man
And an old man was he
He married sweet Mary
The Queen of Galilee

As they went a-walking
In the garden so gay
Maid Mary spied cherries
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Mary said to Joseph
With her sweet lips so mild
Pluck those cherries Joseph
For to give to my Child.

Then, replied Joseph
With words so unkind
I will pluck no cherries
For to give to the Child

Mary said to cherry tree
Bow down to my knee
That I may pluck cherries
By one, two and three.

The uppermost sprig then
Bowed down to her knee
Thus you may see, Joseph
These cherries are for me

When Christ was Born.

This Carol is preserved in a Manuscript now in the Harleian Collection at the British Museum. It dates early in the Sixteenth Century.

Christo paremus canticum, in Excelsis Gloria.

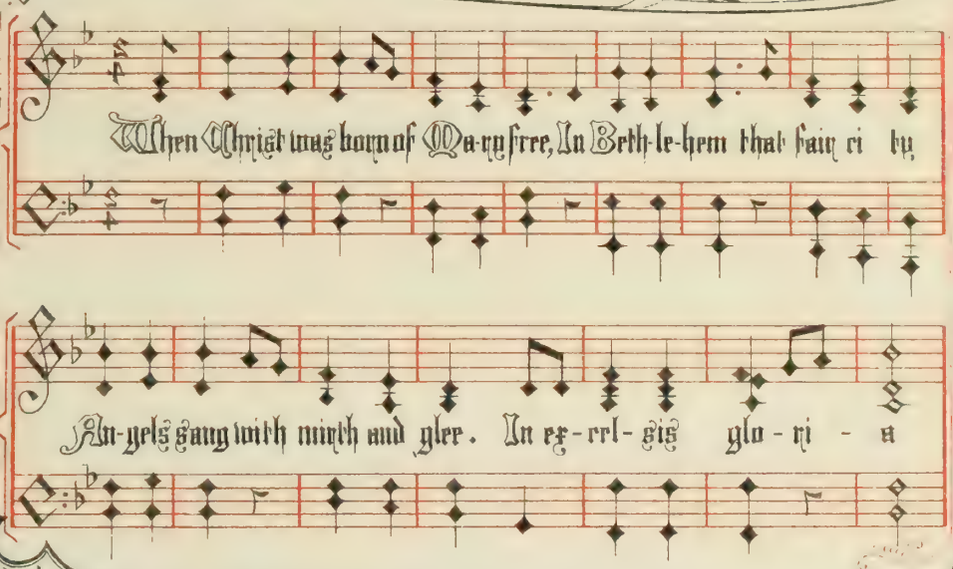
WHEN Christ was born of Mary free,
In Bethlehem, in that fair citie,
Angels sang with mirth and glee,
In Excelsis Gloria!

Herdsmen beheld the Angels bright,
To them appeared with great light,
And said "God's Son is born this night,"
In Excelsis Gloria!

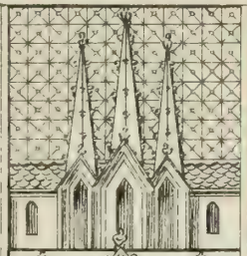
This King is come to save mankind,
As in Scripture we do find,
Therefore, this song have we in mind,
In Excelsis Gloria!

Then, Lord, for Thy great Grace,
Grant us the Bliss to see Thy face,
Where we may sing to Thy solace,
In Excelsis Gloria!

When Christ was born.



CHRISTO PARVULO CANTICUM EXCELSIS GLORIA



When Christ was born of Mary free,
In Bethlehem in that fair Citie
Angels sang with mirth and glee
In Excelsis Gloria.

Herdsmen beheld the Angels bright,
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And said, Gods Son is born this night,
In Excelsis Gloria.

This King is come to save mankind,
As in Scripture we do find,
Therefore this have we in mind
In Excelsis Gloria.

Then, Lord, for Thy great Grace,
Grant us the bliss to see Thy face,
Where we may sing to Thy solace,
In Excelsis Gloria.

The Sunny Bank.

There is evidence that this Carol was known early in the Sixteenth Century. Under various forms it has long been popular both in the North and West of England.

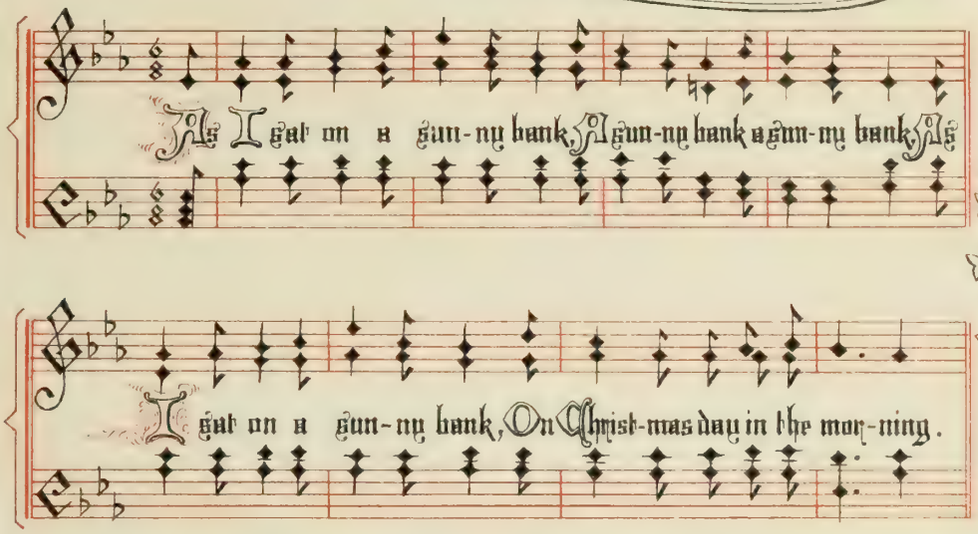
AS I sat on a sunny bank,
A sunny bank, a sunny bank,
As I sat on a sunny bank,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

I spy'd three ships come sailing by,
Come sailing by, come sailing by,
I spy'd three ships come sailing by,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

And who shall be with these three ships,
With these three ships, with these three ships,
And who shall be with these three ships,
But Joseph and his fair Ladye.

Oh he did whistle and she did sing,
And all the bells on earth did ring,
For joy that our Saviour He was born,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

The Sunny Bank.



As I spy'd three ships come sailing by,
Come sailing by, come sailing by,
spy'd three ships come sailing by,
Come sailing by, come sailing by,

And who should be with these three ships,
With these three ships, with these three ships
And who should be with these three ships,
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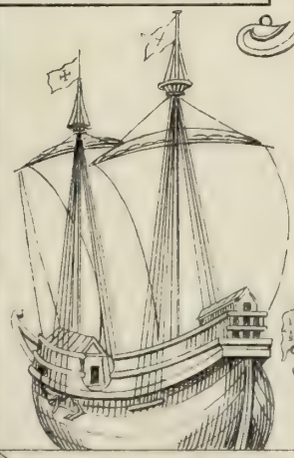
Oh! he did whistle and she did sing,
And all the bells on earth did ring,
For joy, that our Savior He was born,
On Christmas day in the morning.



Come rejoice, all good Christians.

A Carol of some antiquity, and frequently to be found upon the broadsides published at Christmas.

COME rejoice, all good Christians,
And rejoice now, I pray,
For joy our Redeemer
Was born on this day,
In the city of David,
At a cottage so poor;
Then rejoice and be merry,
We have blessings in store.
Rejoice and be merry,
Set sorrows away,
Christ Jesus, our Saviour,
Was born on this day.

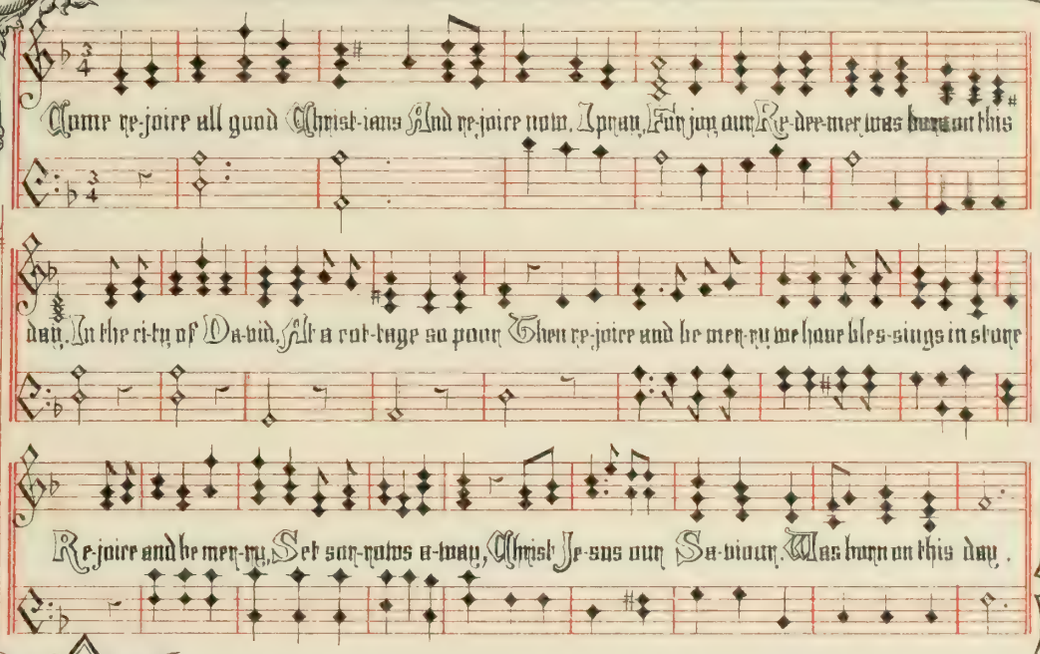
Our Lord He was born
Of a Virgin most pure,
Within a poor stable,
Both safe and secure;
He was guarded most safely
With Angels so bright,
Who told three poor shepherds
These things in the night.
Rejoice and, etc.

They said, "Be not fearful,
  But to Bethlehem go;
Then rejoice and be cheerful,
  For 'tis certainly so;
For a young Son to Mary
  Is in Bethlehem born,
Then rejoice, all good Christians,
  And cease for to mourn."
                Rejoice and, etc.

And when those three shepherds
  Did to Bethlehem come,
And arrived at the stable,
  Then in they did run.
Where they found blessed Mary
  With Jesus, her Son;
There they found our Lord sleeping,
  And thus they begun:
                Rejoice and, etc.

With the sweetest Alleluia
  The heavens did rejoice,
With the Saints and the Angels,
  And all with sweet voice,
Crying, "Glory and honour
  To our Heavenly King,"
In the clouds of the air
  Then this Host they did sing.
                Rejoice and, etc.

Come Rejoice.



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CHRIST·JESUS·OUR·SAVIOUR
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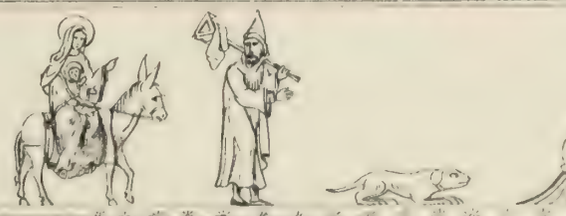


The Holy Well.

This Carol may be ascribed to the latter half of the Sixteenth Century. On a sheet copy printed during the last Century, it is called "A Carol on Christ's Humility to Sinners."

AS it fell out one May morning,
And upon a bright holiday,
Sweet Jesus asked of His dear Mother,
If He might go to play.

"To play, to play, sweet Jesus shall go,
And to play now get you gone,
And let me hear of no complaint,
At night when you come home."

Sweet Jesus went down to yonder town,
As far as the Holy Well,
And there did He see as fine children
As any tongue can tell.

And He said, "God bless you, every one,
And your bodies Christ save and see;
Little children, shall I play with you?
And you shall play with Me."

But they made answer to Him, "No!"
They were lords' and ladies' sons;
And He was but a maiden's child,
Born in an ox's stall.

Sweet Jesus turned Him round about,
And He neither laugh'd nor smil'd;
But the tears came trickling from His eyes,
Like water from the skies.

Sweet Jesus turned Him round about,
  To his Mother dear home went He,
And said, "I have been in yonder town,
  As after you may see.

"I have been down in yonder town,
  As far as the Holy Well;
And there did I meet with as fine children
  As any tongue can tell.

"And I bid God bless them, every one,
  And their bodies Christ save and see;
Little children, shall I play with you?
  And you shall play with Me.

"But then they answered me, 'No!'
  They were lords' and ladies' sons,
And I was but a maiden's child,
  Born in an ox's stall."

"Though you are but a maiden's child,
  Born in an ox's stall,
Thou art the Christ, the King of Heaven,
  And the Saviour of them all.

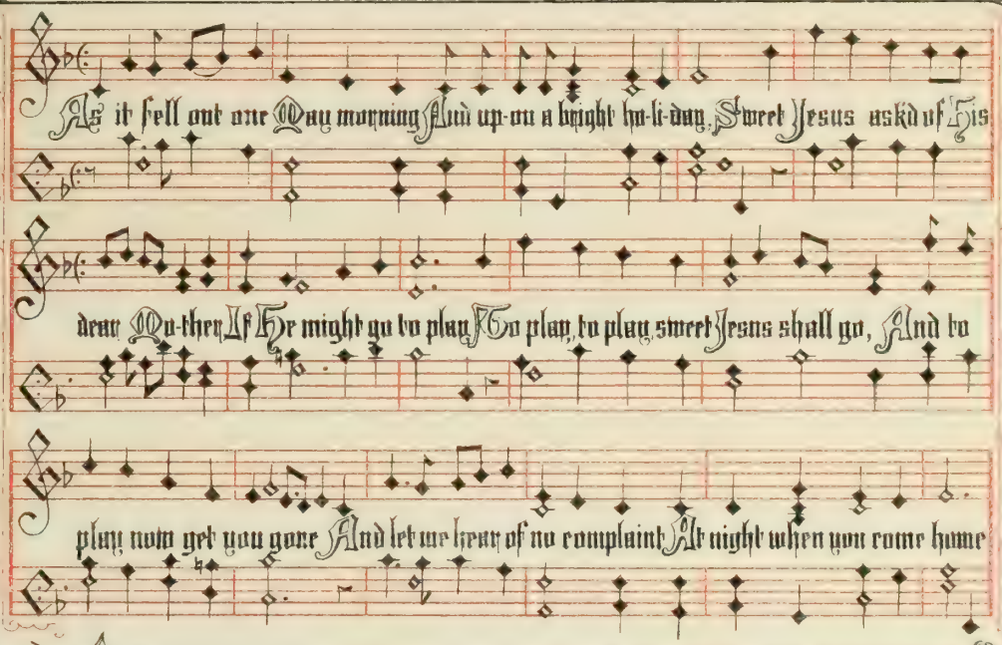
"Sweet Jesus, go down into yonder town,
  As far as the Holy Well,
And take away those sinful souls,
  And dip them deep in hell."

"Nay, nay," sweet Jesus mildly said,
  "Nay, nay, that may not be,
For there are too many sinful souls
  Crying out for the help of Me."

O then spake the Angel Gabriel,
  Upon one sure set steven,[1]
"Although you are but a maiden's child,
  You are the King of Heaven.

[1] Appointed time.

The Holy Well.



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